Sustainability strategy

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This document is Deliverable 5.2 on the "**Sustainability Strategy**" for the Erasmus+ project Climate University for Virtual Exchanges (CLUVEX). It defines the measures ensuring the continuation, institutionalisation, and expansion of project activities beyond the funded project period (2023–2026). The strategy addresses pedagogical, technical, financial, organisational, and policy dimensions of sustainability, in line with Erasmus+ programme requirements.

The document has been written and updated by the CLUVEX teams of the University of Helsinki (UH, Finland), University of Copenhagen (UCPH, Denmark), Odessa I.I. Mechnikov National University (ONU, Ukraine), Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (TSNUK, Ukraine), Yerevan State University (YSU, Armenia), and the Bioart Society, Finland.

Lead Editors (final version): Dr. Arsen Aproyan, Yerevan State University, AM

Contributors to this document:

University of Helsinki, Institute for Atmospheric and Earth System Research (UH-INAR)
Hanna Lappalainen, Alexander Mahura, Laura Riuttanen, Julia Karhumaa, Aleksi Vauhkonen, Sini Bäckström, Mikko Kulmala, Alla Borisova

Odessa I.I.Mechnikov National University (ONU)
Inna Khomenko, Valeriya Ovcharuk, Natalia Kriuchkova, Nataliia Bulat

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (TSNUK)
Olga Shevchenko, Andrii Gozhyk, Sergii Zapototskyi, Sergiy Snizhko

Yerevan State University (YSU)
Alexander Markarov, Arsen Aproyan, Hasmik Movsesyan, Karen Chazaryan

University of Copenhagen (UCPH)
Alexander Baklanov, Roman Nuterman, Maher Sahyoun, Lukas Hjelmer

Bioart Society
Yvonne Billimore, Eliisa Suvanto

Table of Contents

Contents

Preface 3

1. Introduction 3

1.1 Overview of the CLUVEX Project 3

1.2 Purpose of the Sustainability Strategy 4

1.3 Scope and Objectives 4

2. Strategic Vision for Sustainability 5

3. Multiplication and Scalability of Project Activities 5

3.1 Integration into Partner Universities' Curricula 5

3.2 Expansion to Other Institutions and Networks 6

3.3 Strengthening Institutional and International Partnerships 6

4. Sustainability of Project Activities 6

5. Financial and Partnership Sustainability 7

5.1 Financial Sustainability 7

5.2 Partnership Sustainability 7

6. Governance and Policy Sustainability 8

6.1 Governance Structure 8

6.2 Policy and Institutional Integration 8

7. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement 8

8. Sustainability Action Plan 8

9. Conclusion and Long-Term Outlook 10

10. Annex: Climate Horizon Group Exercise 10

Preface

The Climate University for Virtual Exchanges (CLUVEX; 2023-2026; https://www.atm.helsinki.fi/cluvex) project represents an innovative approach to climate education and international cooperation in higher education through the use of Virtual Exchange (VE). By bringing together universities from Erasmus+ Programme Countries (Finland and Denmark) and Neighbourhood East Countries (Ukraine and Armenia), together with an art and science non-profit organisation called Bioart Society based in Finland, CLUVEX addresses urgent global challenges related to climate change, sustainability, and green skills development.

As the project approaches the end of its funded period, it is essential to ensure that its results, methodologies, and partnerships continue to deliver impact. This Sustainability Strategy (Deliverable D5.2) outlines the measures through which CLUVEX activities will be maintained, institutionalised, and further developed beyond the project lifetime. The document provides a structured and realistic roadmap for long-term sustainability at pedagogical, technical, organisational, financial, and policy levels.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the CLUVEX Project

CLUVEX is a three-year Erasmus+ project (2023–2026) coordinated by the University of Helsinki, Institute for Atmospheric and Earth System Research (UH-INAR). The project operates in the thematic areas of *climate action, environment and nature protection, environment and climate change,* and *green skills*.

The partnership includes:

- University of Helsinki, Institute for Atmospheric and Earth System Research (UH-INAR), Finland – Coordinator
- University of Copenhagen (UCPH), Denmark
- Yerevan State University (YSU), Armenia
- Odessa State Environmental University (OSENU), Ukraine & since Autumn 2024, the Odesa I.I.Mechnikov National University (ONU), Ukraine
- Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (TSNUK), Ukraine
- Bioart Society, Finland

CLUVEX builds on the Climate University (CU; https://www.climateuniversity.fi) online MOOC s (www link) developed and hosted by the University of Helsinki. Climate University MOOCs have been piloted since 2018 in more than 25 higher education institutions in Finland. The project aimed to engage approximately 2,500 higher education students through interactive online courses using a Virtual Exchange format. During the CLUVEX project, background materials for

students and a joint Climate Horizon group exercise were developed, which was implemented during the virtual exchange.

The core aim of CLUVEX is to bridge students from European and Neighbourhood East universities and engage them with climate competences, particularly climate change adaptation and mitigation, while also strengthening interdisciplinary, green, and transversal (soft) skills. As an innovative element, the BioArt Society introduces artistic perspectives on climate change through VE lectures and creative exercises.

1.2 Purpose of the Sustainability Strategy

The purpose of this Sustainability Strategy is to ensure the long-term continuation and impact of CLUVEX beyond the Erasmus+ funding period. Specifically, the strategy aims to:

- Safeguard the continuation of VE-based climate education activities;
- Embed CLUVEX outcomes within partner institutions' structures and policies;
- Identify realistic financial and organisational sustainability mechanisms;
- Support the upscaling of CLUVEX activities;
- Ensure alignment with European and global climate and education priorities.

1.3 Scope and Objectives

This Sustainability Strategy covers the period following the end of the project in 2026 and beyond its lifetime, and focuses on the following objectives:

- Establishing and maintaining a sustainable and scalable Virtual Exchange (VE) model for climate education. *It is realised through the established and 5 times carried out the CLUVEX VE Weeks as the course "Climate University for Virtual Exchange" in the educational platform DigiCampus hosted by the University of Helsinki. It includes DigiCampus areas with necessary materials and instructions to follow for students and moderators, participants of the VE Weeks.*
- Ensuring long-term use and development/ improvement/ refinement of the CLUVEX established VEs (the materials from the VE Weeks for students as a course) and providing access to online courses to the Climate University network and resources. *It is realised through publicly available (at the CLUVEX website) materials of the VE Weeks such as slides and video-recordings of the delivered lectures; demonstrations of web-based tools for climate related data visualization, analysis and interpretations; guidebooks for VEs, climate concepts and definitions, and code of conduct during and after VE Weeks; step-by-step instructions for personal and groups' work on individual and collaborative Climate Horizon exercises; instructions for using of the education, communication, and collaboration e-platforms. It is also realised through granting access*

(following simple registration process) to online educational courses (allowing to explore, learn, and integrate into personal curriculum or teaching materials) of the Climate University. The climate, sustainability, etc. related courses are available in English, some selected courses are also available in Finnish and Swedish.

- Supporting continued collaboration between European and Neighbourhood East partners/ universities. *The CLUVEX Partners (UH, UCPH, TSNUK and ONU) and the CLUVEX Associated members continued collaboration in preparation of the COST Action proposal (submission in autumn 2026) on Earth System Research Network (where more than 30 Partners are involved in total), where topics of climate change, climate adaptation and climate mitigation are ones of interest. Opportunity for students' and teachers' exchanges, including VEs, between UH and ONU Universities will be realised in proposal for Erasmus+ Call in spring 2027. TSNUK and ONU joined the Transfer Finland Knowledge (TFK) bi-lateral Call in spring 2026 for joint proposal (coord. by UH; incl. 6 Partners from Ukraine and 3 Partners from Finland) on Finnish-Ukrainian Earth System Research Network, where both VEs and short-term visits from Ukraine to Finland are highlighted. TSNUK sent 2 students to visit UH during March 2026. All these proposals are part of the PEEX programme, coordinated by UH. Moreover, participants of VE Weeks (both students and moderators from HEIs) open potential to initiate steps toward collaboration with …*
- Facilitating future participation through institutional, national, and international networks. *It was realised and will be continued through the Climate University network in Finland, UNA Europa, UArctic Network of Universities, … add here … and other networks. Moreover, the developed approach for VEs to be successfully refined and applied in several newly started projects such as REOPEN (Next Generation Workforce – Empowering Young People for Improved Employment), EMPOANDES (EMPOwer ANDES societies to improve adaptation to climate change through the co-creation of climate services capacities), … add here … , proposals in preparation, and others for online trainings*.
- Contributing to long-term climate awareness and sustainability leadership.

2. Strategic Vision for Sustainability

Sustainability within CLUVEX is understood as the long-term continuation, institutionalisation, and expansion of the project's pedagogical approaches, digital infrastructure, and international cooperation model.

The strategy is aligned with:

- The European Green Deal;
- EU priorities on digital transformation and green skills;

- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

CLUVEX concept (organization of VE weeks) and Climate Horizon Exercise have been designed to contribute to a durable transformation of climate education in higher education by fostering low-carbon internationalisation, inclusive participation, and interdisciplinary learning. The project's long-term vision is to support the education of a new generation of **Climate Messengers** capable of promoting climate awareness and sustainability strategies in their future professional and societal roles.

3. Multiplication and Scalability of Project Activities

3.1 Integration into Partner Universities' Curricula

Goal:
To embed Virtual Exchange (VE) methodologies and CLUVEX-developed content into regular teaching and learning activities at partner institutions, ensuring their long-term use beyond the project lifetime.

Actions:

- The integration of CLUVEX results into partner universities' curricula will be achieved through a structured and gradual process. During the project implementation phase, Virtual Exchange modules and course elements have been piloted within selected courses. Building on this experience, partner institutions will continue incorporating VE components into bachelor's, master's, interdisciplinary, microcredentials and LLL programmes.
- Internal institutional guidelines for VE implementation will be developed and adapted based on the CLUVEX Guidelines. These will support academic staff in designing and delivering VE-based learning activities in a consistent and pedagogically sound manner.
- Capacity building will be ensured through continuous training of academic staff, teaching assistants, and course facilitators. This includes workshops, peer-learning activities, and the use of training materials developed within the project. As a result, partner institutions will maintain the necessary expertise to independently implement VE methodologies.
- In addition, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be applied to assess student participation, learning outcomes, and the overall effectiveness of VE integration. Feedback collected from students and educators will be used to further improve course design and ensure quality assurance.

Timeline:
2025–2027

3.2 Expansion to Other Institutions and Networks

Goal:
To expand the CLUVEX model beyond the original consortium.

Actions:

- Dissemination of CLUVEX results through institutional and international networks *network ;*
- Engagement with networks such as Una Europa and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) Global Campus;
- Provision of onboarding materials for new institutions interested in VE-based climate education.

Timeline:
Ongoing from 2025 onwards.

3.3 Strengthening Institutional and International Partnerships

Goal:
To ensure long-term cooperation among existing and future partners.

Actions:

- Establishment of formal cooperation agreements where relevant;
- Co-creation of new VE courses and modules;
- Participation in international climate education and sustainability forums.

4. Sustainability of Project Activities

The sustainability of CLUVEX is ensured through a combination of institutional integration, low-resource operational models, permanent digital infrastructure, and continued inter-institutional cooperation.

After the project lifetime, the CLUVEX website with deliverables and materials, 5 carried out the CLUVEX VE Weeks (as courses at DigiCampus educational platform) and the Climate University courses and resources will continue to be hosted and maintained by the University of Helsinki. All Virtual Exchange concept, pedagogical models, course structures, and learning materials developed within CLUVEX—including CLUVEX Guidelines, facilitation models, and VE exercise—will be fully embedded into the Climate University framework.

Partner universities (UH-INAR, UCPH, ONU, TSNUK, and YSU) as well as the BioArt society have progressively built internal capacity in online climate education and VE facilitation during the project. CLUVEX concept has been introduced As a result, they are able to continue delivering and participating in VE-based Climate University courses using existing academic staff and institutional resources, without the need for additional external funding.

The CLUVEX model is intentionally designed as low-cost and scalable, relying on:

- Existing digital infrastructure (website including all the relevant information; Climate University website with open access to MOOCs) and easy-to-use software like Zoom for shared virtual exchanges
- Permanent teaching staff and the pool of educated moderators;
- Integration into regular curricula;
- Virtual mobility.

5. Financial and Partnership Sustainability

5.1 Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability will be supported through:

- Follow-up project applications under Erasmus+ (including Virtual Exchange, Cooperation Partnerships, and related actions);
- Development of joint proposals under HORIZON Europe focusing on climate education, digital transformation, and green skills;
- Cost-sharing through institutional budgets and in-kind contributions.

5.2 Partnership Sustainability

The consortium will maintain collaboration through:

- Continued academic cooperation, joint proposal/projects and joint course development;
- Use of established networks such as Una Europa and the WMO Global Campus;
- Long-term cooperation agreements were relevant.

6. Governance and Policy Sustainability

6.1 Governance Structure

A clear distribution of responsibilities among partners will ensure continued coordination. A light governance structure will support decision-making related to VE implementation, platform use, and dissemination.

6.2 Policy and Institutional Integration

CLUVEX partners will advocate for:

- Formal recognition of Virtual Exchange within institutional curricula;
- Inclusion of VE in internationalisation and digital learning strategies;
- Alignment with national and European higher education frameworks (EHEA).

7. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

Sustainability will be monitored through:

- Tracking participation and institutional uptake;
- Regular feedback from students and educators;
- Annual internal reviews of pedagogical and technical quality.

Monitoring results will be used to:

- Improve course design and facilitation;
- Update VE methodologies;
- Support evidence-based follow-up funding applications.

8. Sustainability Action Plan

To support the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainability Strategy, a structured Sustainability Action Plan has been developed. The table 1 below summarises the key sustainability areas, planned actions, responsible partners, timelines, and expected results or indicators.

Table 1: Sustainability Action Plan

Sustainability Area	Planned Actions	Responsible Partners	Timeline	Expected Results / Indicators
Pedagogical Sustainability	Integrate CLUVEX VE concepts and materials into Climate University courses	UH-INAR	2025–2026	VE materials are permanently available and reused
	Update VE Guidelines and facilitation models	UH-INAR, UCPH	Annually	Updated guidelines published
Technical Sustainability	Maintain and host the CLUVEX e-website and available project materials, Climate University courses and resources	UH-INAR	Continuous	Platform uptime and functionality
	Implement accessibility and usability improvements	UH-INAR	Annual review	Positive user feedback
Institutional Integration	Embed VE activities into degree programmes	All universities	2025–2027	VE recognised within curricula
	Align VE with institutional internationalisation strategies	All universities	2025–2026	VE included in strategy documents
Capacity Building	Train educators and teaching assistants in VE	UCPH, ONU	Annual	Number of trained staff
	Support student facilitators and moderators	YSU, TSNUK	Annual	Number of student facilitators
Financial Sustainability	Prepare Erasmus+ follow-up proposals	UH-INAR, YSU	2025–2026	Submitted proposals
	Develop HORIZON Europe project concepts	Consortium	2026 onwards	New funding secured
Partnership Sustainability	Maintain collaboration via networks (Una Europa, WMO Global Campus)	All partners	Continuous	New partners engaged
	Establish long-term cooperation agreements	Consortium	2025–2027	Signed MoUs
Dissemination & Impact	Disseminate CLUVEX model nationally and internationally	All partners	Continuous	Events, publications

	Promote Climate Messengers concept	All partners	Continuous	Alumni engagement
Monitoring & Quality Assurance	Collect student and staff feedback	All partners	Each VE cycle	Evaluation reports
	Conduct annual sustainability review	Steering Committee	Annual	Updated action plan

9. Conclusion and Long-Term Outlook

CLUVEX establishes a sustainable, inclusive, and climate-responsible model for international higher education cooperation. By embedding Virtual Exchange into institutional structures, sustaining the Climate University courses and resources, CLUVEX e-website with deliverables and materials, and carried out the CLUVEX VE Weeks (as courses at DigiCampus educational platform), and maintaining strong international partnerships, the project ensures that its educational and societal impact continues beyond 2026.

Through the education of **Climate Messengers**, CLUVEX contributes to long-term climate awareness, green skills development, and sustainable development across Europe and the Neighbourhood East.

10. Annex: Climate Horizon Group Exercise

The Climate Horizon Group Exercise ... add text here …